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## THE MUSICAL TIMES,

## And Singing Class Circular.

AUGUST 1st, 1848.

## MUSICAL PIC-NICS.

*(From the Manchester Times Literary Supplement.)*

WE have often talked to our readers about the pleasures and advantages of an occasional run into the country for the sake of change from the wearying monotony of money-making, and of obtaining a draught of pure fresh air to stimulate the lungs and set the blood into a quicker and a healthier flow. Example, however, is much better than precept, say our moralists, and so we this week take pen in hand to sketch the outline of a day's excursion recently enjoyed in pleasant society, and under one of the bluest and brightest skies that has looked down from heaven on a northern landscape.

We are winged through the air with railway speed to A—, arrive there about two o'clock, are met on the platform by a kind face and a warm hand, and are led to an old farm-house, where, in a large room, the ceiling of which is scarcely a couple of inches above our aspiring heads, with chairs and other furniture of rudely-carved black oak, a snowy cloth is spread upon an hospitable table, with other agreeable indications; whilst upon a large fire, under an arched old-fashioned fire-place, a tolerably sized frying-pan is filled with eggs and ham that are singing and sputtering, and making all sorts of assurance that if we only sit down, and have patience, they will be ready for us directly. And even so it happened, and we were presently located and enjoying not only an agreeable repast, but an agreeable chat with people who quite understand what agreeable means. We had nothing in the shape of "double x" or "Bass," for you must know, gentle reader, we belong to "the faithful" in temperance, and once upon a time could boast a medal; draughts of deliciously pure cold water, followed by raspberries and cream, and other little luxuries indicative of country fare and country life, made up the feast.

But we must not stay in doors whilst the green hedges look so inviting, filled as they are with a thousand singing birds, so we put on our hats and bonnets—for of course bonnets were a principal feature in the party,—and are soon rambling up a winding green lane, shaded by tall oaks and elms, through the thick foliage of which glances the bright warm sun, whilst at every sudden bend to the right or left, beautiful nooks are seen that would warm the heart of a painter such as Bonnington or Creswick; here a high bank, up which are rude steps formed by well-worn stones, leading to a rustic gateway, a small plot of flower beds, and a low-roofed cottage, telling of its ancient origin by its black cross pieces and its white walls, as well as by the figures over the door-way carrying us back to the days of cavaliers and roundheads; here we have a little dell, such as one might imagine to be visited by a troop of fairies nightly, with its flat green sward, its rocky embankment where tall trees with gnarled roots cling tenaciously, and creeping plants hang their festoons of flowers in graceful confusion; then we come upon a small copse of dark firs, where young rabbits are bounding and springing at our feet;

and now we find the ascent more difficult over a thick sandy soil, the road still winding through masses of wild heaths, and blue bells, and roses, when suddenly we find ourselves high above, on the ridge of a steep acclivity covered with thick wood, through which at intervals we catch bird's-eye glimpses of an expansive landscape, marked out in wonderful variety by those hedge-rows peculiar to England, the rich "thick-coming" harvest glowing in the sunlight. From the wood come merry voices, the song or the hearty laugh; and here immediately beneath us is a party of eight or ten artizans, with their wives and families, the children screaming with delight, clapping their hands, rolling and romping upon the grass, the elders busily discussing the merits of several small provision baskets, whilst a threadbare musician, who can no longer look upon the beauty of God's bounty, but whose face seems full of holiday pleasure, is discoursing most peculiar music upon an instrument he calls a fiddle; neither he nor his hearers are very particular as to time and tune, but the bow goes merrily, making noise enough, and joining cheerily other discordant sounds that are yet so pleasant, even in their discord, to all who think upon the source from whence they spring. We must not be too particular in our judgment of such scenes, nor imagine them coarse and vulgar because they are not exactly in accordance with the character to which our tastes have been familiarized. Hearts may be as pure, spirits as earnest, and hope as strong here as with the rest of us. These people feel the stirring of kindly thoughts within, a sympathy with the beautiful about them, or they would not be as cheerful and as joyous as their loud laugh proclaims them,—it is their peculiar mode of expression. The half-holiday has given them the opportunity of this visit, let us hope it may bring hundreds of others from this great cauldron of bubbles and hot water, to the enjoyment of similar pleasures.

But hush! above even the tuneless squeak of the fiddle and the loud laugh of the merry group, we hear a sound of music in the distance,—moving in the direction from whence it arises, the most beautiful harmony falls upon the ear, now soft and low, now pealing forth like the full diapason of some cathedral organ. We hasten forward, the fine mellow voices of both male and female more distinctly marked as we approach, and now we have reached a beautiful villa, standing on a rocky height and overlooking the extensive plain beneath. A few short years back and this spot was a rude stone quarry; see what may be done with good taste, and feeling to prompt it into action. Here in the garden we perceive a happy group of young and old gathered together, each with a music book in hand, chaunting forth the fine quaint madrigals of the olden time. We are recognized by a friend, and invited to join them. The master of the domain adds his welcome, and without farther ceremony we enter the wicket gate, and find ourselves in the confines of a small terrestrial paradise. Fresh green terraces, broken by winding walks and variegated flower-beds, lie before the open windows of a snug-looking little nest of a house, and beyond in the far distance, the richest prospect of green fields, woods and parks, extending to the horizon. The hospitable possessor of this beautiful residence has gathered together a small choir of fine voices, who have brought with them one in whom they have occasion to place confidence as an instructor and director. Within doors the table is

covered with choice refreshments, to which all are pressingly invited, and in the garden are music stands and books. And now the director takes his baton, the singers congregate around him, others less gifted sit or stand apart in various groups, the pitch-pipe is sounded, the very birds in the bushes are silent, and that rich stream of voices bursts forth into hearty merry glee in a strain as cheerful and as pleasant as the words would indicate:—

"Down in a flowery vale, all on a summer's morning,  
Phyllis I spied fair nature's self adorning;  
Swiftly on wings of love I flew to meet her;  
Coldly she welcomed me when I did greet her.

I warbled thus my ditty:  
'O shepherdess! have pity,  
And hear a faithful lover  
His passion true discover:

Ah! why art thou to me so cruel!"

Then straight replied my jewel:

'If gold thou hast, fond youth, 'twill speed thy suing;  
But if thy purse be empty, come not to me a wooing!'"\*

Hearty is the laugh and the applause which greets this quaint old ditty of 1541, by Master Festa—many of the fair ones declaring the sentiment decidedly libellous; that woman has more truth in her heart if she really loves, and that the poet was very ignorant of his subject. Scarcely had this point been settled, when four fine voices start up with a German glee, "Spring's delights are now returning," by Herr Muller, full of beautiful melody as well as harmony, in which our German brethren so much excel. They have taught us much, and are teaching us more. They have sent us Beethoven and Weber; we have sent them Shakspeare and Scott. Is not such intercourse better than the clash of sword or boom of cannon? Christianity directs and prompts the one, Heathen barbarism the other. Surely these interchanges of thought and feeling will wipe away the stain of blood that Kings and Governments and aristocracies had cast upon us through the long vista of past time.

After two or three more ditties of a cheerful character, the baton is laid down, and all separate to ramble over pleasant walks, and among fruits and flowers; here we wind along by the margin of a small piece of water, falling from the high ground above, over which a rustic bridge is thrown; a couple of swans are floating like snow-clouds upon the surface; from this lower ground we look upwards to the white mansion, backed with the dark green foliage beyond, and over the whole expanse of wood and garden, we hear the merry ringing laugh, and see flitting forth, or passing into shade, the varied colours of bonnet, ribbon, and shawl, accompanied by the happiest of faces. Then comes the invitation to tea; and passing into the wood which forms the background of the picture, we find ourselves under a wide-spread awning, before a long table surrounded by seats, and covered with all those agreeable things which go to make up the beauty of a tea-table; a negro in white jacket offers us coffee, "black as mine own face," and a fair dairymaid with a bright clear complexion in happy contrast, pours into our neat china cup the thick cream, from the fine cows that we remarked, with their beautiful white and brown skins, as we came through the pastures. The young gentlemen of the party are particularly attentive to the ladies, and the host is moving about, and watching over the interests of young and old. Again we are assembled on the green sward—a merry catch or medley is given

most cleverly, and then, as the golden sun is sinking in the purple-clouded west, we hear in fine keeping with the stillness and shadow of approaching night, that beautiful melody of Sebastian Bach, as harmonized by William Shore, to the words of a favourite bard, James Montgomery:—

"There is a calm for those who weep;  
A rest for weary pilgrims found;  
They softly lie and sweetly sleep  
Low in the ground.

The storm that wrecks the winter sky,  
No more disturbs their deep repose,  
Than summer evening's latest sigh  
That shuts the rose.

"Art thou a mourner? hast thou known  
The joy of innocent delights,  
Endearing days for ever flown  
And tranquil nights?  
O live! and deeply cherish still  
The sweet remembrance of the past;  
Rely on Heaven's unchanging will  
For peace at last.

"The soul of origin divine,  
God's glorious image, freed from clay,  
In Heaven's eternal sphere shall shine  
A star of day.

The sun is but a spark of fire,  
A transient meteor in the sky,  
Thou soul, immortal as its sire,  
Shall never die."

But our vocalists will not let these feelings be the last memory of such a charming day, and so bursts forth the merry "Fa la la;" and then the book is closed, the wand is broken, and home all wend their way, delighted with the beauty of the scene and hour, the charm of sweet sounds, the amiability of friends, the social intercourse enjoyed. Happy the man who has the power, happier he who has the grace, to gather such opportunities and share them with his fellow-men. How many of this world's dark spirits may be laid by the spell of kindness; how many rude ones turned to gentleness; how many anxious faces wreathed with smiles; how many wearied hearts refreshed. Reader, if thou art one of earth's gilded favourites, if fortune has clothed thee in purple and fine linen, then follow a good example—"Go and do thou likewise."

#### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. B. I., of Manchester, is thanked for his suggestion; and it will be followed when it can be done conveniently.

MR. W. A. ARCHER will accept our thanks for his notice of misprint. In No. 50, Musical Times, page 16, the two last notes in column 1 should be la, not ut.

#### Brief Chronicle of the last Month.

MRS. DISTIN, the wife of the celebrated Sax-horn player, died on the 23rd of June, within three months after the death of her eldest son.

MANUEL GARCIA, the celebrated professor of singing in the *Conservatoire* of Paris, has arrived in London. He is brother to Malibran and Pauline Garcia, and was the teacher of the latter, as well as Jenny Lind.

THE OXFORD COMMEMORATION took place July 4th. The *Messiah*, the *Creation*, and other works were given. The principal vocalists were Madame Tadolini, Mdle. Schwartz, Misses Birch and Lucombe; Messrs. Sims Reeves, Lockey, Benson, Phillips, &c. The orchestra included some of the Royal Italian Opera band, who were missed from their places at the performance of *La Favorita* on Tuesday.

\* This favourite Madrigal is published in No. 3 of *The Musical Times*, to the words "Soon as I careless stray'd."